

THE
SUBSTANCE
OF
A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE
CHAPEL IN GREAT QUEEN STREET,
LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS,

On SUNDAY, JULY 1, 1798.

UPON ISAIAH, CHAPTER LXII, VERSE 11.

BY THE
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London:
PRINTED BY S. LOW, BERWICK STREET, SOHO.

1799.

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A SERMON,

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ISAIAH, CHAP. LXII, VERSE 11.

“ Behold the Lord hath proclaimed to the end of the World ; say ye to the daughter of Zion, behold thy salvation cometh ; behold his reward is with him, and his work before him.”

THE Apostle Peter very justly observes, that the ancient prophets inquired, and searched diligently, what, or what manner of time the spirit of Christ, which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow ; unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, by them who have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven. From hence we see, that the ancient prophets were favoured of God to see, that

in the fulness of time the Redeemer of Israel would appear in the world, would finish transgression, make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness. That life and immortality should then be brought to light by the gospel, and multitudes both of Jews and Gentiles should see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But of all the ancient prophets who were favoured with those delightful prospects, Isaiah evidently had the pre-eminence; being in a very peculiar manner divinely illuminated, so that he seems to have fully understood the mystery of man's redemption, and the gracious designs of God in sending Christ into the world. As he foretold the sufferings and death of our blessed Redeemer, so he clearly describes the nature of gospel salvation, and the holy, happy, and prosperous state of the church of God in those glorious days, when the gospel was to be fully preached to Jews and Gentiles without distinction.

In the chapter before us, the prophet expresses the most lively and vehement desires after the accomplishment of the gracious designs of the blessed God. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." How evidently does it appear, that his whole soul

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was engaged in the work of God, seeing that it was the fixed purpose of his mind to give the Lord no rest, till he should look in mercy upon the desolations of the Jewish church, and so pour out his spirit from on high, that it might become a praise in the earth, or that it might be brought into such a flourishing state, as he very beautifully expresses it; "that the righteousness thereof might go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." He clearly shews us here, what manner of spirit the Ministers of Christ should be of: how much they ought to have the prosperity of the church of God at heart, and how fervently they ought to pray, and how diligently they ought to labour, for the accomplishment of the gracious purposes of God, in the salvation of a lost and ruined world.

In the remaining part of the chapter the prophet describes the holy, happy, and flourishing state of the gospel church. But as it would take up too much time to go through the whole, I hasten to the words of the text. In the tenth verse he shews us with what simplicity and clearness the Ministers of Christ ought to preach the gospel. In what plain, clear, intelligible terms they ought to express themselves, so that the most ignorant among the people may understand them. "Go through, go through the gates, prepare you the way of the people; cast up, cast up the high way;

way; gather out the stones, lift up a standard for the people." As if he had said, it is the design of God that you should make the way of salvation plain and familiar to the people; therefore go through, go through the gates yourselves, till you are fully acquainted with the high road to the city of God, then prepare the way for the people. Make it as plain to them as the high roads which are cast up, now are to the traveller. Take away the stones, remove every difficulty out of the way, and shew the people that the ways of the Lord are equal; that he is ever ready to assist them by his grace and holy spirit, so that they shall find his ways to be ways of pleasantness, and all his paths peace. The words of the text then follow: "Behold the Lord hath proclaimed to the end of the world; say ye to the daughter of Zion, behold thy salvation cometh." We well know, that these words were fulfilled, when our blessed Redeemer visited this world in person; when he himself published the gospel of peace, and accomplished the work of man's redemption. That they were more remarkably fulfilled after the day of Pentecost, when thousands upon thousands embraced the glad tidings of salvation. That they have been fulfilling in the Christian church to the present day, and that they remain to be fulfilled in every individual here present, who has not experienced the truth of them already.

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In the words we have the peculiar work of a faithful Minister of Christ described. Say ye to the daughter of Zion, that is, to all who are willing to hear you: behold your salvation, or rather your Saviour cometh; behold his reward is with him, he does not come empty handed, but he comes loaded with blessings, he having purchased, now freely offers to you present and eternal redemption, and his work is before him. He is come in these days of his spirit to convert the world, to establish a kingdom which shall never be moved.

In these words behold thy salvation, or thy Saviour cometh, two things are implied. First, Behold thy Saviour cometh to finish the work of man's redemption, by his meritorious death and passion: and Second, Behold thy Saviour cometh in the power and grace of his spirit, to communicate to the minds of the people, all the invaluable benefits which he hath purchased for them.— And these two particulars include the whole work which the Ministers of Christ are sent by him to accomplish.

First, Behold thy Saviour cometh to accomplish the work of redemption. This every Minister of Christ should so fully and clearly explain, as that he may say to the people who generally attend upon his ministry, as the Apostle Paul did to the Galatians—"Jesus Christ hath been evidently
set

set forth as crucified before your eyes.” That is, I have fully declared unto you, “ That God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son ; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” That in consequence of this, “ Jesus was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him :—for he bore the punishment due to our sins in his own body upon the tree.” Here then with the blessed apostle, we are to declare to all who hear us, “ God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, no longer imputing their trespasses unto them :” and in consequence of this, he hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation, and we are now ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled unto God.

Here then we see, that the God against whom we have so greatly sinned, and who on that account might most justly have punished us, so far from having any such design, that he himself hath not only found out a way to extend his mercy and love to us, so as that his justice may be preserved inviolate, and his purity and holiness unspotted ; but he condescends to invite and beseech us to accept of pardoning mercy and grace, so that we being blessed with a sense of his favour, may rejoice in him as the God of our salvation.

Our

Our Blessed Redeemer hath opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness for us, and he now calls upon us to arise and wash away our sins in that fountain, calling upon the name of the Lord. God himself is so far from being angry with us, and watching (as some good men represent him) for an opportunity to pour out his vengeance upon our guilty heads, that he hath erected a throne of grace, merely on our account, and he beholds us from thence with eyes of infinite pity and love. He does not appear to us from this throne, as he did to the trembling Israelites from Mount Sinai, when delivering his holy law to his servant Moses. No; he now speaks unto us from Mount Sion, and clearly discovers to us the riches of his mercy and love, and kindly and graciously invites us to accept of all the inestimable benefits of the new covenant. And let it be well observed, that it was not the death of Christ, which moved God the Father thus to love lost mankind, but on the contrary, God so loved us, that he freely gave his only begotten Son, to suffer, bleed, and die for us men and for our redemption. Hence we see that present and eternal salvation freely flows from this fountain—the infinite love of God our heavenly Father, who hath redeemed us unto himself by the death of his well-beloved Son.

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Secondly,

Our

Secondly, Every faithful minister must say to the daughter of Zion, Behold thy Saviour cometh in the power and grace of his holy spirit, in order to communicate to the minds of men, the unsearchable riches of his grace.

And, upon due consideration, we shall find that the salvation which he brings is every way suited to the state of his ruined creatures: that he is every way qualified to save and to bless us; and that he only designs to raise us up from the ruins of the Fall, and to make us holy and happy, and heirs of an everlasting kingdom.

It is evident, from the sacred scriptures, that sin hath so blinded our understanding, that, as the apostle observes, " we no longer receive the things of the spirit of God, but they appear foolishness unto us; neither can we know them, because they are spiritually discerned." That this is the very case of fallen man, universal experience and observation will fully prove. For who shall we find among the wisest and most learned of mankind, (till they are divinely enlightened,) that have any knowledge of the nature of Gospel salvation, or of the benefits which our blessed Redeemer hath procured for us? He must be a stranger to the present state of the christian world, so called, who does not see that the words of the prophet are awfully fulfilled: "Darkness hath covered

vered the earth, and grofs darknefs the people." In confideration of this darknefs, which by the firft tranfgreffion hath overspread the mind of man, another inspired writer hath said, " The vision of all is become as the words of a book which is sealed, and the book is delivered to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee, and he saith, I cannot, it is sealed; and the book is delivered to one that is unlearned, saying, Read this, I pray thee, and he saith, I am not learned." From hence it appears, that the learned and the unlearned are both alike with respect to all divine and spiritual knowledge, that the scriptures are sealed, and they understand not what they read. They see no more beauty in the word of God, or in the religion therein described, than the Jews did in the Lord Jesus Christ while he sojourned among them. The pearl of great price, the treasure hid in the gospel field, yea, the unfearchable riches of Christ are treated by them with neglect, if not with contempt and scorn. And this will always be the case, till the light of the spirit of God is communicated to the mind. And in order that it may, our blessed Redeemer came into the world, " as a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel." For this reason he is called the Sun of Righteousness, that shall arise upon them who fear him with healing in his wings: and for the same reason he is called

the day-spring from on high, which shall visit all who wait for his appearing: and when he doth this, as a discovery is made of the real state of our mind, of our guilty, wretched, and ruined condition by reason of sin, so a discovery is also made of that abundant mercy and grace, which is treasured up in Christ Jesus, for those who fly for refuge to lay hold upon the hope which the Lord hath set before them. We see in such a manner as words cannot express, that with our God there is mercy, pardon and peace and plenteous redemption. The design of God in instituting the gospel ministry is, to bring us out of darkness into marvelous light, so that we may stand distinguished from others, as being children of light and of the day, so that following the holy Jesus, considered as the light of the world, we may not walk in darkness, but shall be favoured with the light of life.

And as sin hath brought darkness upon the mind, so by our actual transgressions we have brought guilt upon our conscience. The words of the prophet are certainly true with respect to every child of man, "We all like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to our own way, hence the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." The holy apostle also publishes the same awful truth: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" and in consideration

ation of this, "every mouth must be stopped, and all the world stand ~~quietly~~ ^{guilty} before God." This will be readily acknowledged by most people; but how do they discover the blindness of their minds, in their astonishing unconcern respecting this! It is acknowledged that I am a creature of a day, that my life is only a span long, that I stand upon the brink of eternity every moment, that an eternity of inconceivable happiness awaits me, if I am duly prepared to enjoy it, and that an eternity of inconceivable misery awaits me if I should die in my sins. That I am deeply guilty in the sight of that God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and that I must, upon leaving this world, appear at his awful tribunal, to be judged by him according to my works: and although I know not but this may be my lot, the very next hour; yet, to the astonishment of the very angels of God, I am unconcerned about it: nay, and in direct contradiction to the whole revelation of God, I vainly think (if I think about it at all) that I shall find mercy from God at the day of judgment, and that he will then pardon my sins. Here, if ever, we may stand and wonder at the blindness of fallen man, that he will first venture to live in open rebellion against God, that he will dare to affront his Maker to his face, and after all is bold enough to launch into eternity with the guilt of all his sins upon him;

him ; and strange to think of, he intends to appear confessedly guilty before his Judge, and at the same time his Judge is the very person against whom he hath so greatly sinned, and yet he hopes to obtain mercy. Vain and foolish man ! The day of judgment is not the time for God to display his mercy in pardoning the guilty, but to judge the world in righteousness, and to give unto every one according as their works have been. He who appears guilty at that bar, will certainly be condemned, and must be banished from the presence of God into the regions of eternal night.

Some there are who, beyond a doubt, are more deeply guilty than others, having run into greater lengths of actual wickedness, and some for a much longer time than others : and not only so, but some men's sins have been attended with far greater aggravating circumstances than others, they having sinned against far greater light, so that their sins may properly be said to have been of a scarlet or crimson dye. But although it must be acknowledged that there is this difference between one man and another, yet as all have violated the holy and righteous law of God, all are guilty in his sight, and therefore must be condemned for ever, if they do not obtain pardoning mercy in the present world.

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But this was the design of God in sending Christ into the world, that he should make a perfect atonement for the sins of mankind, and that in consequence of this, pardon and peace and plentiful redemption should be freely offered unto us in his name. In consideration of this, the ministers of Christ may, upon good ground, declare unto the daughter of Zion, Behold thy Saviour cometh with pardoning mercy to thee, and unto all who wait for his appearing. This was the commission which our Lord himself gave unto his disciples, when he sent them forth to preach the gospel: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." And did he not send forth the apostle Paul with the same glad tidings? Did he not send him to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among all them who are sanctified, through faith in his name? In how clear a manner did Zacharias the father of John the Baptist speak of this, when, filled with the Holy Ghost, he was given to understand the mystery of man's redemption by Christ Jesus: "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the highest; for thou shalt

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go before the face of the Lord to prepare his way, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us." Agreeable hereto the apostles of our Lord published these glad tidings wheresoever they came, fully and freely declaring both to the Jews and Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ; manifesting to all, a God reconciled unto them through the merits of his beloved Son, and ready to receive them into his favour, freely pardoning all their past offences. "Be it known unto you (saith the apostle) that by this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him every one who believeth is justified freely from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." And the apostle Peter declared the very same glad tidings to those who attended upon his ministry. "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Here we see the first ministers of the gospel fulfilling the glorious design of God in sending them forth to labour in his vineyard: and must not the ministers of the present day copy their example? Must they not preach the same Jesus, and publish the same salvation in his name? Is there any other name under heaven given among men, whereby we of the
present

present age may be saved, but the name of Jesus? Or is there any other salvation for us than that which he hath purchased for us by his blood, and freely offers to us in his gospel? Surely, if we are ever saved at all, it must be by that one Saviour who hath redeemed us unto God by his own blood, and in that one way which God hath appointed. But although nothing can be more clear than this, (except we lay aside the scriptures altogether,) yet how abundantly do great numbers bear witness to the truth before laid down, how strangely do they discover the blindness of their own minds, in that they suppose, that although the God of love did manifest himself in so gracious a manner to the apostles and the first Christians; and although he was pleased to bless them with the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins; yet we have no reason to expect that we shall be so highly favoured by him! Is the Lord changed then? and is he less inclined to be gracious, and to make his creatures happy, than he formerly was? Or rather, Is he not without any variableness or shadow of turning? Is not Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever? Does not his mercy endure for ever, and his truth and his faithfulness from one generation to another? But although such people do not expect to be so highly favoured in this world as the first Christians were, I will do them the justice to acknowledge,

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that they do expect to go to the same Heaven, and to be happy in the presence of the same God. But allowing this, it only more fully manifests the ignorance that is in them. For how can they go to the same Heaven, except they walk in the same way? And is not Christ the way, the truth, and the life? and hath he not said, "No man cometh to the Father but by me?" So that, view the subject in what light you will, the truth pours in upon you, and the blindness of the carnal mind is made manifest.

But lest any one should suppose that we pervert the scriptures, and put a different meaning upon them from what other good and wise men have done, whose writings are familiar to us, let us attend to what we have heard from the Common Prayer Book this morning. And have we not heard these solemn words? "He pardoneth and absolveth all them who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel." Here then we see the church and the scriptures exactly agree: and from both we learn, that such is the goodness and mercy of God, that he manifests himself to be a God gracious and merciful, who pardoneth iniquity, transgression, and sin, to all who by true repentance return unto him, and who lay hold upon the hope which he hath set before them; who believe or embrace the offers of mercy which he hath made unto us in the gospel.

If

If it was the exprefs design of our gracious Lord in dying for us to make an atonement for our fins, and to procure redemption and falvation for his guilty creatures; would it not be exceeding ftrange indeed, if, after all, he fhould withhold the bleffing from us? And would it not be ftranger ftill, if after all the offers of mercy which he hath made unto us, all the promifes which he hath left upon record in his word, and all the kind and gracious invitations which we meet with in the gofpel, that ftill we muft remain in the dark, and that we can have no affurance of his favour? Hath an infinitely wife and gracious God called upon us to feek that which we can never find, to ask for that which we fhall never receive, and to knock at that door which fhall never be opened to us? On the contrary, hath he not faid, "Ask, and ye fhall receive; feek, and ye fhall find; knock, and the door fhall be opened unto you." And as if this was not enough, he adds, "For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that feeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh the door is open." Tell us then, ye profoundly wife and learned men, what it is that thofe askers receive, or what thofe feekers find, and what door it is which ftands open to thofe who knock—if they do not find the pearl of great price, if they do not receive the pardon-

ing love of God, and if it is not the door of salvation which stands open to them ?

There is a strange propensity in the human mind to limit the holy one of Israel, and to make him less gracious to mankind than he hath declared he will be in his holy word : and when it is clearly proved from that word, that it is the gracious design of God that we should be favoured with a clear manifestation of his love, and that we should be assured that he hath blotted out our transgressions as a cloud, and our iniquities as a thick cloud : then with Nicodemus we strangely ask, How can these things be ? But how vain a question is this to ask, where God is concerned ! Can we suppose that infinite wisdom will be at a loss to find out a way to discover himself to his creatures, as reconciled to them through Christ Jesus ? Surely no. We may then with safety conclude, that as he in all ages of the world hath caused the light of his countenance to shine upon his servants, so that they have been enabled to rejoice in him as the God of their salvation, we also shall be as highly favoured by him as all those worthies who have gone before us have been ; and we also shall see the salvation of God, and shall experience the riches of his mercy and grace brought into our own souls.

Thirdly : And as sin hath blinded the understanding, and brought guilt upon the conscience, so it hath
also

also defiled the whole soul. It hath spread its poisonous nature throughout all the powers and faculties of the mind, so that the words of the prophet may be justly applied to every child of man: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores;" and, as the apostle observes, the mind as well as the conscience is defiled. How deeply sensible of this humiliating truth was the holy Psalmist, when he said, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me!" And he must be an entire stranger to the state of his own mind, who does not feel the force of the apostle's words: "The law of God is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." And in that chapter, how clearly does he describe the nature and power of original depravity, and shew how strangely it captivates the mind, and leads the man astray from God!—"When we were in the flesh (saith the apostle), that is, when we were in our fallen state of mind, the motions of sins which were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." In these words we may see our own picture, if we can see at all. For, have we not found in our own mind those motions of sin, as he justly calls them? a strange propensity to those evils which are hateful in the sight of God, which he hath expressly

pressly forbidden, and which would bring ruin and destruction upon us? Solomon, with great propriety, calls this the plague of our own heart ; and when we are made to feel the force of his words, we shall be as desirous to be delivered from it as Paul was, when he said, “ O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?” But the blessed God hath provided a remedy for this disease also. I thank God (adds the apostle), through Jesus Christ our Lord ; as if he had said, Wretched and miserable as I am, by reason of my native depravity, yet I bless God I am not left without hope ; for he hath sent his well-beloved Son to redeem me out of this bondage of sin and corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And in the very next chapter he triumphs in this glorious deliverance, first by declaring, that there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus ; and secondly, by describing the nature of that liberty into which the Christian is brought, saying, “ The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”— He shews us, that as he was made free from the guilt of sin, being justified freely through faith in the Redeemer, so he was delivered from the power and dominion of sin by the sanctifying influences of his holy spirit.

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This faithful servant of God informs us, that he did not receive the gospel from man, nor was he taught it by men, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. As this was the case, we may conclude, he had as full an acquaintance with the gospel, and as clear views of the gracious designs of God in sending Christ into the world, as any one man ever had or can have. And he had also experienced this same gospel to be the power of God unto salvation to his own soul; so that he was not only a faithful minister, but a witness of the truth which he published in the name of the Lord. Accordingly, he shews us, that the design of our Saviour in finishing the work of our redemption was, "That he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us to himself as a peculiar people zealous of good works." And he adds in the same epistle these very remarkable words: "After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards mankind appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his own mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Here the apostle shews us, not only the nature of gospel salvation, but in what particular way God designs to save us, which is according to his mercy. Now his mercy was never so wonderfully displayed towards lost mankind,

kind, as when he gave his well-beloved Son to die for our redemption. We therefore must be saved by experiencing the blessed effects of this mercy so displayed, in the gift of Christ: that is, we must enjoy the benefit of that atonement which he made for sin, in our own souls; we must be freely and fully justified through faith in his name. But this is not obtained by works of righteousness which we have done; for the apostle well knew, that we have no works of righteousness to be saved by, but that we are guilty polluted sinners, who never were in a capacity to do any good work, and therefore must be saved by grace, and by grace alone: and then he informs us, that as we are unholy, as well as guilty, we must be saved by the washing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. That is, the God of love purifies our deeply polluted hearts, by the sanctifying influences of his holy spirit; so that, being delivered from the bondage of sin and corruption, we may serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

It would be endless to quote all the passages from this apostle which speak of the same thing--- Of our being created anew in Christ Jesus; of our being dead unto sin, but alive unto God; of our having put off the old man with his deeds, and of our having put on the new man, which after God is created anew, in righteousness and true

true holiness: so that whoever reads the epistles of this apostle with any degree of attention, must shut his eyes exceeding close, if the light does not break in upon him.

But lest any one should think that we mistake the apostle's meaning, we will again appeal to the Prayer-Book. And have we not heard this very remarkable and scriptural exhortation this very day? "Therefore, let us beseech him to grant us true repentance, and his holy spirit, that those things may please him which we do at this present, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord."—It would be easy to prove, that every part of this exhortation is exactly scriptural—as for instance: "Let us beseech him to grant us true repentance—" "God hath exalted his son Jesus to his own right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins unto Israel." It is added, "and his holy spirit." Jesus said unto the people, "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall my heavenly Father give his holy spirit to them that ask him!" But why must the holy spirit be given unto us? "That those things may please him which we do at this present:"—that is, that we may worship God acceptably; for,

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faith

faith our Redeemer, " God is a spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth ;" and an apostle exhorts us to pray in the Holy Ghost. It would be easy to shew, were it necessary, that the remaining part of the exhortation is equally agreeable to God's holy word. Have we not offered up this prayer to God since we met together in his name? " Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy holy spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord." And in offering this prayer to God, we only do that which our Lord himself hath taught us, when in obedience to him we say, "Thy kingdom come;" for, if we understand the proper meaning of our own prayers, then we pray that that kingdom may come which our Lord saith must be within us, and which an apostle hath said, " is righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Whether, therefore, we search the Scriptures, or read the Common Prayer Book, we shall be obliged to acknowledge, that we must be born of the spirit, in order to our entering into the kingdom of heaven; and that we be enabled to serve God acceptably, we must experience his sanctifying grace.

Were we to read the writings of all the wise and holy men who ever wrote upon the nature of
true

true religion, we shall find them all agree respecting this—The absolute necessity of regenerating grace, or the sanctifying influences of the spirit of God, in order to our serving him according to his will. They may, and they do differ one from another respecting a variety of lesser matters, and hold very different religious opinions; but in this they are all agreed—"Except a man be converted, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

What then is the religion of Jesus Christ? It is the kingdom of God set up in the mind. It is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, experienced by us. It is the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeping our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his son Jesus Christ our Lord. In other words, it is the light of God shining in the understanding, so that we are made wise unto salvation; wise enough to have a proper regard for our own highest and dearest interests, so that we now live as candidates for Heaven, and make it the grand business of life to prepare for that eternal world. It is the peace of God in our conscience, arising from a sense of his love towards us in Christ Jesus, discovered to us in the word, and sealed to us by the spirit of God, so that we are made truly happy. And it is the love of God shed abroad in

the heart, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us; or it is the divine nature communicated to the mind, so that we are made inwardly and outwardly holy. This is the religion which the Lord himself hath called us to experience in his holy word, and without which we are dead while we live, having only a form of godliness, but are destitute of the power.

As the faithful ministers of Christ are authorised to say to the daughter of Zion, Behold thy Saviour cometh to sanctify and bless thee, as above described, so also to declare that his reward is with him—There is doubtless a reward of grace, as well as a reward of glory: and that religion is attended with a present reward, will be acknowledged by all who believe the account of it already given. Solomon, speaking in the person of Wisdom, says, “ Riches and honour are with me, yea durable riches and righteousness: my fruit is better than gold, yea than fine gold, and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment, that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures.” The whole Book of God bears witness to the same thing, and all that ever tasted that the Lord is gracious, will also testify that the Lord is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him. “ Blessed are the people

ple (saith holy David) who know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord! in the light of thy countenance; in thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." And speaking of his own happiness, he says, " Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." But here so large a field opens to our view, that our time will not permit us to be particular respecting it; but we must conclude this head with the words of an apostle, " Whom having not seen ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

If the above be a just account of the experience of the children of God, then religion is its own reward. " Then Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" and the Church of England speaks nothing but the truth, when she declares, " that the service of God is perfect freedom." And must it not needs be so; If the followers of God are received into his favour, and are blessed with an assurance of his love; if they live under his guardian care and protection, and know that nothing can happen to them by chance, and that all things shall work together for their good; if they are adopt-

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ed into the family of God, enjoy a peace which passeth all understanding, walk in the light of God's countenance, partake of his grace and holy spirit, and are made heirs of an eternal kingdom — then they must needs be a happy people indeed. In a word, if the Lord hath pleasure in the prosperity of his people; if he rejoiceth over them to do them good; if he will be a sun and shield, will give them grace and glory; and if he will withhold no manner of thing that is good from them who walk uprightly; if eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor ever entered into the heart of man to conceive, what good things the Lord hath prepared for them that love him, then we may say upon good ground to the daughter of Zion, Behold, his reward is with him.

The remaining part of the text we shall be obliged to leave for want of time. But before I conclude, permit me to ask, If these things are so, is there any folly upon earth to be compared with that which those persons are guilty of, who live in the habitual neglect of religion? It matters not at all how wise or how learned they may be accounted, either by themselves or by other people; they will one day be obliged to acknowledge that they have strangely neglected the one grand end of their existence, and therefore may say, "We fools counted their lives madness, and their end

to be without honour." Whether these men will now believe it or not, we are obliged to tell them in plain terms, "The foul that sinneth it shall die, yea, the wicked shall be turned into hell with all the people who forget God." "The awful day will surely come which shall burn as an oven, when all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them, and neither leave them root nor branch." "Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we would gladly persuade men," yea, all who attend upon our ministry, to repent and turn unto him, before iniquity prove their ruin. And O that it was in my power to prevail upon all who are here present to know the day of their visitation, and to seek the Lord while he may be found!

Many of you know, and are well acquainted with, the important truths now delivered, and through the infinite mercy and love of God you have experienced the saving power of Divine grace in your own minds. Blessed are ye of the Lord; for there shall be a performance of all that he hath spoken, and you shall find every precious promise of the gospel made good to you. Be faithful then unto him that hath called you, and his mercy and love in Christ Jesus shall abound towards you; and when he hath finished his work in you, and you have finished the work which he
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sent you into the world to accomplish, then he will say unto each of you, "Come up hither and take thy seat with me." And so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting regions of immortal glory—which God of his infinite mercy grant unto all who are here present, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

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